

**National-level Celebrations should also be held in Rural Areas – Najib
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BAGAN DATOH, July 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak tonight said national-level celebrations should not only be held in big towns such as Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.

Instead, he suggested that such celebrations, including Aidilfitri open houses, to be held in small towns or rural areas to give opportunities for the people there to also share the joy and meet leaders.

"National-level celebration should not just be held in Kuala Lumpur or Putrajaya, but it also should be distributed to the rural areas because the people there also want to celebrate.

"Apart from that, they also get the opportunity to meet leaders, and in this way we can forge relations with the local residents," he added.

The prime minister was speaking at the 2016 Aidilfitri Malaysia Open House, which was attended by about 50,000 people at the field of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Hutan Melintang near here.

Also present were his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor; Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and wife, Datin Seri Hamidah Khamis; Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz; Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein; Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir and wife, Datin Seri Saripah Zulkifli and a few cabinet ministers.

Najib said hosting open houses at national level helped promote peace and harmony.

"This is something that cannot be denied. In some other countries you cannot have such celebrations because something bad may happen, that can cause harm to lives and properties.

"Remember that peace and security must not be taken lightly as we are still not free from security threats," he said.

The prime minister was referring to the arrest of 14 individuals in five states from July 14 to 20 for their alleged involvement with Daesh militant groups.

"I urge everyone not to let riots and chaos that have occurred in other countries to happen here in our country to the extent that we cannot hold our festive gatherings," he added.

The prime minister said the political stability in the country was among the factors that enable such celebrations to be held.

"Recently, we held by-elections in Kuala Kangsar and Sungai Besar and we won in both constituencies. This shows that we are strong and have the people's support. "Based on my visits to several countries, there are countries whose currency dropped 100 per cent because of their dependence on oil.

"We are grateful to have oil, oil palm industry, service industry like tourism, and because of that we want more people to come to Malaysia because they bring us revenue," he added.

On revenue that was returned to the people in the form of 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M), Najib, who is also Finance Minister, said the action by some quarters in equating the government's aid for the people to fodder was an insult.

"Some have referred to the policy of giving BR1M as a heinous act and a form of bribery, (just leeking feeding animals). Giving BR1M cannot be equated to feeding animals," he said.

Najib said Malaysia is not the only country that gives financial assistance to the people because such assistance is offered by several countries but under a different name.

The Prime Minister said RM5.2 billion has been allocated to give out BR1M throughout the country while Perak will receive RM521 million and the allocation for Bagan Datoh is RM14.8 million.

"When the people receive BR1M, we are actually stimulating the local economy because the people will use the money to buy things," he said.

Meanwhile, 50 food and beverage stalls were set up for the celebrations which started at 2.30pm, offering traditional dishes like laksa; leman; rendang tok and Jawa Nasi Ambeng.

Meanwhile, Najib also announced Bagan Datoh as a full district, making it the 12th district in Perak.

Prior to this, Bagan Datoh was under the administration of the district of Hilir Perak.

It was gazetted as a district last June 15.

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